

6 December 1968

Sihanouk, Norodom

Sec. 4.01.4 Shadow over

Angkor

CAMBODIA

Lights ... Camera ... Sihanouk

His Royal Highness Samdech Preah Norodom Sihanouk Upayuvareach is a man of many parts, some of which he enthusiastically plays himself in his role as Cambodia's leading film maker. Last week he staged his nation's first international film festival, at which two of his full-length works, *Shadow Over Angkor* and *The Little Prince*, were

prince (played by Sihanouk's son, Prince Norodom Sihamoni) who ascends the throne after his father's death and prevails over the jealous machinations of a wicked aunt. The credits? Naturally, the movie was produced, directed and written by Sihanouk, though he was not credited with the "classical and popular" Khmer musical score. There was also a third Cambodian film shown at the festival, this one a documentary short called *Royal Cortège*, also by Sihanouk. If the Prince had so chosen, the festival could have been an all-Sihanouk spectacular. He has made eight full-length films, six of which have been released.

* Where the U.S. at Pakistan's request will soon begin closing an intelligence base from which it has been monitoring Soviet missile and space programs.

screened, along with entries from 23 other nations.

Shadow opened the festivities in Phnompenh, and it was a tossup whether the credits or the plot were more interesting. The credits were relatively simple: Producer, Norodom Sihanouk; Director, Norodom Sihanouk; Scenario, Norodom Sihanouk; Dialogue, Norodom Sihanouk; Music, Norodom Sihanouk; Star, Norodom Sihanouk. The story line, on the other hand, was a bit more complex.

The film begins as a Cambodian counterespionage agent, played by Sihanouk, waits at the port of Sihanoukville to greet a lovely Latin American ambassadress, played by Sihanouk's half-Cambodian, half-Italian wife, Princess Monique. It soon becomes apparent that she is the unwitting dupe in a super-sinister effort to detach the nation's western provinces and thereby create a state allied to the West. (In that, there were striking parallels to an alleged anti-Sihanouk plot of 1959). Among the superdupers are South Vietnamese intelligence agents, a corrupt Cambodian general, one of Monique's Latin aides and, inevitably, the CIA.

As the scene shifts to the fabled ruins of Angkor, Director Sihanouk's favorite location, Star Sihanouk convinces Star Monique that he is not a Communist, as she has been led to believe, but indeed a neutral. Love blossoms. The spies are trapped with a radio and a trunkful of gold, and their plot is foiled. But the ambassadress must leave, and she flies off into the twilight as the hero stands at mournful attention on the airstrip.

Asian Solution. Producer Sihanouk, feeling that *Shadow* had a few political overtones, disqualified it from entry in what he had decreed to be a nonpropaganda festival. Another Sihanouk special, however, was a candidate for a prize. This was *The Little Prince*, which tells the story, aptly enough, of a little

The judges, of course, faced a mild dilemma when prize-giving time came around. How does one criticize a film made by one's host, particularly when that host happens to be the Chief of State? But in splendid Asian fashion, a decision that satisfied everyone was reached. Prizes were given out to entries from Japan, North Viet Nam, Canada and the National Liberation Front. And the Grand Prize? It went to *The Little Prince*, produced, directed and written by ...